Loretta Hunt

September 25, 2010

CI 509

**When does the REAL day begin?**

For my student shadowing experience, Ms. Wilderman helped me select a student, Krysta Meyers, who is a Junior at Douglas McKay High School in the Northeast of Salem, Oregon and a member of the Arts and Communications Academy. The days at McKay are block scheduled with “odd” and “even” days and 8 periods divided between the two days. This paper explores an “odd” day in Krysta’s life at McKay, as it is more commonly known. Courses on her odd days include Marine Science, Advisory, Wellness Skills II (same as Health Skills II), Earth/Space Science, and Health Occupations. All of the students were open and accepting of my being in their classes even though they were uncertain of why I was there. I told Krysta’s fellow students that I was in school learning to be a teacher and that one of my assignments is to write a paper on the average day of a student at McKay. Teachers were respectful and clear, assignments were detailed and visible on the board, through a projector or a document camera, but Krysta just wasn’t that interested in school or coursework. Her day began at 3:00pm.

Although Krysta verbally agreed to allow me to follow her around all day, she acted nervous when asked. She rocked back and forth rapidly repeating “yes,” “sure,” and “I don’t mind.” Krysta admitted to me that she used to have someone follow her around in middle school because she forgot to turn in her homework so often (I assume a type of IEP). As a matter of fact, Krysta failed English her Freshman and Sophomore years in large part due to incomplete and missing assignments. So, I recognized that I should be sensitive to this fact. Marine Science was the first class of the day with Mr. Mauro (I later found out I would be visiting Mr. Mauro again for fifth period.).

Notebooks had just arrived at McKay, so Mr. Mauro asked the students to decorate and individualize a page to be placed on the front of their notebooks. He modeled a decorated notebook for them by placing it under the document camera, and then on the board he listed the 4 elements that should be added to the cover page. While the students created their covers, Mr. Mauro played music and walked around from table to table asking the students what a particular song was or where he/she heard it played before. He continuously challenged them in one way or another and helped reluctant students start or others that were doing something else get back on task. For this assignment, Krysta dove right in and began creating and drawing.

Krysta seemed to enjoy this project and worked diligently on it. When Mr. Mauro walked over to Krysta’s table, she pointed out that she used a character from Pokemon as part of her scene. He then looked at another student at the table who sat staring at her paper with only “marine science” written on it. He suggested that she knew something about video games and Annamae, so she could draw from that. Krysta whipped her head around and said,

“Why are you only talking to the Asian kids about video games?”

To which Mr. Mauro responded,

“I am asking students interested in art.” And then pulled out a notebook of the student to whom he was directing his questions and showed Krysta the Annamae drawings on it. Krysta ‘s response was defensive, so I asked her what her nationality is.

Krysta’s ethnicity is ¼ Chinese, ¼ Cambodian and ½ Caucasian, although she strongly identifies herself as Asian. Her mother is from Cambodia and that is where her mother met her father, who still resides there teaching. They are now divorced. When I asked her if she has the opportunity to see him, she responded,

“Why would I want to see him? He is there with a whole new family, so if I went it would have to be seeing his family. He does not care about me and he left my mom.”

Now, Krysta and her mother live together in a house only a few blocks from the school. She feels that her neighborhood is quiet and safe, but her mother is very strict about boys coming around. Krysta’s told me that her mother does not believe in “group projects” because she did not like that Krysta’s “friend,” Tony, from American Literature came over for 5 hours to “work.” Krysta attributes the lack of understanding to the fact that her mother only went to 6th grade. In fairness to her mother, Krysta confessed to me that Tony “forgot” the assignment paper work so they just talked all day. All she talked about was going out to eat with him after school.

After school hours were really the goal of the day, even though there was still lunch and two more classes. Wellness Skills was our next class together and the layout of the room was so tight I could barely move. The substitute had “Bell Work” on the screen. Krysta finished the first assignment in minutes. The next assignment went up and he asked the students to work on that for the rest of the class period. While Krysta started it, she turned to her friend beside her and started playing Hang Man. That is what she did for the rest of the period. When the bell rang and the substitute asked everyone to hand in his or her work, Krysta asked me to turn it in for her. When I gestured to the empty side of the paper, she replied,

“It is all up here. “(Pointing to the temple of her skull)

The break meant lunch, but Krysta was not planning on eating. She was waiting for after school so she and Tony could go get something to eat together. Krysta went to the library to work on her PowerPoint, due in her seventh period class. She met with her partner. Nothing was accomplished during lunch. Krysta tried to tell her Wellness Occupation teacher that her partner left her flash drive at home, but the teacher calmly and swiftly instructed her that it was 50% off hers and her partner’s grade unless Krysta wanted to try to work on it during class and present it last. This did not happen, and while Krysta seemed a little nervous about it, my feeling is that she got over it pretty quickly. She headed out with a smile on her face ready to eat a meal with Tony.

Krysta is not much “into” school or her community. As a matter of fact, she does not seem too terribly aware of much that is going on outside her own personal experiences. She is much more interested in socializing and boys. Krysta is very much entrenched in her own world, which probably makes her very much a typical high school student. No one is really watching what Krysta does. Neighbors and any friends in the community are too busy working and caring for their own families. I initially thought that Krysta might have a learning problem. Now I think that she just doesn’t see the purpose of school at all. She isn’t sure what means to an end it provides.